



WORKING TOGETHER TO REINVENT THE FUTURE



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WORKING TOGETHER TO REINVENT VR'S FUTURE

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In the pages that follow, you will find several success stories of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) consumers, carefully detailing their journey to employment with the assistance of the Public VR Program and the satisfaction of their employers with their work. We also highlight major initiatives which the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR) and the State VR Agencies are engaged in that are changing the face of the VR Program and how we serve business and persons with disabilities.

Walt Disney said, "I believe in being an innovator. We keep moving forward, opening new doors, and doing new things, because we're curious and curiosity keeps leading us down new paths." Our members and their staff in the 80 public VR agencies in the states, territories and the District of Columbia, like the businessman and entrepreneur Walt Disney, all keep trying new things and moving forward to facilitate and advance opportunities for individuals with significant disabilities to be gainfully employed in the competitive labor market and to meet the ever-changing labor needs of America's employers. We realize that this is the only way we can achieve a better bottom line for the employment of persons with significant disabilities and businesses.

- VR is still one of the best kept secrets at the state and national level.
- CSAVR's work with business through the National Employment Team, The NET, has made it possible for State Agencies to reach beyond their state borders and serve more businesses in an efficient and effective manner. Businesses view this as a "value added" service to assist them in hiring and promoting individuals with disabilities in the workplace. This fundamental shift in VR service delivery has enabled VR agencies to move from a state system serving business to a "one-company" national approach, meeting the employment needs of businesses while offering expanded career opportunities to individual customers.

- The creation of a Talent Acquisition Portal (TAP) will further enhance the opportunities for businesses to access and hire from a national talent pool of qualified individuals with disabilities. TAP will feature the skill sets and geographic availability of candidates with disabilities from the national VR talent pool.
- Ensuring a smooth transition from school to work for youth with disabilities and their families is crucial for our future and our members realize this, as well as the importance of partnership with other systems necessary to make this happen. One example of the exciting things being done in this area are the Regional Transition Forums (RTFs) that South Dakota General has developed, which bring parents and students together to meet providers and link individualized education plans (IEPs) and individualized plans for employment (IPEs) vocational goals to ensure a seamless transition from school to work.
- Knowing one's customers and their changing needs is crucial to success. To better serve our employer customers, CSAVR members have started initiatives using "place and train" models where certification and training programs are developed with community colleges and business, and offered, as needed, based on the stated hiring needs of the business community. Good examples of this are Nebraska General and Maryland Combined's programs.
- Technology is evolving every day, and our members are experimenting with more efficient ways to use it to better serve our customers. Texas General and Delaware General are two agencies, for example, that are working with their staff to use electronic tablets to increase productivity and efficiency in many aspects of their daily casework and administrative accountability reporting, as well as staying current with their customers.

- Early intervention programs in which State VR Agencies are engaged are making it possible for youth and other eligible individuals with disabilities to choose a path to employment and self-sufficiency, as opposed to reliance on government income supports. Noting the need to reduce the Social Security rolls and follow the lead of the private sector in retaining talent and getting injured workers back to work instead of on disability, CSAVR continues to advocate for an employment first program that would identify individuals most likely to meet SSA's criteria for eligibility when they apply for SSI or SSDI and redirect them to VR to assist them with services to return to work, rather than ever being on the disability rolls.
- Technological advances have made it possible for individuals with the most significant disabilities to engage in competitive employment opportunities that historically were not available to them, and the VR program makes these opportunities available to its consumers.
- Research studies in the provision of VR services inform State Agencies through knowledge translation from research to practice of promising practices that increase employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities served by the VR Program. Two examples are: Wisconsin Easter Seals, focused on the development of in-person and on-line training for counselors to assist them to better serve workers in our agricultural industry; and the University of Montana Rural Studies

Institute, looking at improving the employment of individuals with businesses in rural communities.

CSAVR and State VR Agencies have benefitted from taking advantage of every opportunity to increase collaboration and partnerships with businesses, agencies and organizations that have common missions – that being to increase the number of individuals with disabilities in the competitive labor market.

Finally, CSAVR is engaged in global learning through the European Platform on Rehabilitation (EPR) and is sharing promising practices with our partners across the ocean and learning from their experiences in working with the same population. Our economy is a global one, and to survive and prosper this must be recognized and addressed. CSAVR is building a partnership with our counterpart in Europe; focusing on creating communities of practice, knowledge exchange, study visits, and training for our members so we can learn and teach each other to better serve our customers.

We have made tremendous progress in employing the talents of individuals through the Public VR Program. Our future rests on continuing to innovate, marketing the VR Program, expanding the use of appropriate technologies, improving data collection, and ensuring that Congress and all legislators are fully aware of the benefits of funding a program that puts people to work and creates new taxpayers for America.





SUCCESS STORIES

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Dream Big

Those of you who are regular viewers of FOX television's MasterChef may already know Christine Ha, the newly crowned MasterChef! She competed against 100 other home chefs for this

honor during the course of this reality television show's third season. Christine takes home a nice trophy, a \$250,000 cash prize, and an opportunity to publish her own cookbook.

But did you know that MasterChef Christine is blind? Christine has been diagnosed with a rare autoimmune disease called Neuromyelitis Optica (NMO). It is similar to the more widely researched Multiple Sclerosis in that the overactive immune system causes nerve impulses to misfire, often resulting in vision loss and paralysis. While MS tends to affect the brain, however, NMO mainly interrupts the optic nerves and spinal cord. Christine began losing her vision at age 19 (1999). She quickly lost her vision in one eye. In 2004, her vision decreased to the point that she had to give up driving. In 2007, she lost more vision to the point of only counting fingers which is her current visual status.

Congratulations go out to Christine and to the Division of Blind Services staff in Texas who provided training and support to make this possible. Christine is completing her graduate degree in the Fine Arts and has a cookbook coming out this spring.

Check out Christine's website at: <http://www.theblindcook.com/about/>. She opens with: "I love to eat. I love to cook. I love to write. I am blind." **Her advice to other people with disabilities: "Don't be afraid to dream big. You can accomplish what you want if you really put your mind to it. It won't be easy, but if you're tenacious enough, and if you learn to adapt accordingly, you can achieve all things."**



A Navy Veteran Rebuilds His Life

Thomas McCartney is an outdoorsman. While mushroom hunting one day he noticed something just didn't seem right. "I just couldn't explain what it was, but I knew something was different. Something had happened." The next day he was having difficulty concentrating and functioning. "My boss told me to go to the hospital and that's when I found out I'd had a stroke." The stroke impacted his balance, short term memory, physical stamina and communication.

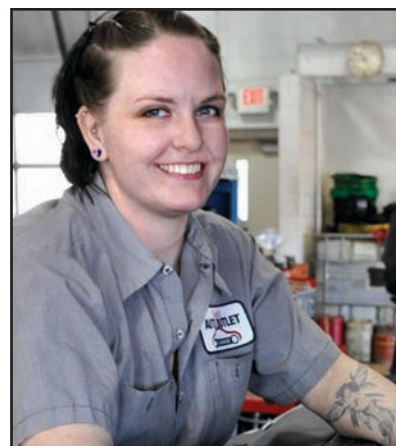
Over the next year, Tom attended occupational, physical and speech therapy sessions. He worked hard and made significant strides. At times Thomas felt overwhelmed, "I remember thinking, how will I ever do what I used to do? How will I ever find a job? There were tough times, but it's not in me to quit. There's no quit in me. That's not what I do". Thomas was determined to get back to work.

Tom, a Navy veteran, decided to attend a Veteran's "Stand Down" Picnic. There Tom met a VR staff member from the Illinois Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) who helped him connect to his local office.

Tom started working with a VR Counselor who said, "I noticed right away that Tom possessed a positive attitude and a strong desire to return to work. The challenge was finding suitable employment that matched his current abilities." He asked Tom to complete a vocational assessment to help determine what type of career would be consistent with his abilities and interests.

After discussing options with Tom, the VR counselor contacted the manager at Stephenson Nursing Center. The VR counselor had worked with the manager before and said, "I know that she desires candidates who are very dependable and reliable, who have a strong work ethic. I knew Tom would be a great match."

Tom was hired for a part time position in the housekeeping department. After job coaching assistance, Tom is working full time. He is now one of the department's best employees, and was recently named Employee of the Month. Tom said, "that was very emotional, there were tears. I am so glad to be back doing a job I like."



Success Under the Hood

Wendy Thayer's work history was very sporadic. Over the years she moved from fast food restaurants to factory work to a grocery store but no job lasted long.

Wendy finally dropped out of the job market and moved in with her parents. She was a single mom, trying to care for two children. She was receiving help from the Family Life Mental Health Center in Coon Rapids. "I was scared," she said. Wendy needed a job to support herself and her children, her therapist referred her to Minnesota VR. Her VR counselor connected her to a project called Custom Futures. The Custom Futures partnership includes Vocational Rehabilitation Services, the Family Life Mental Health Center, and Rise, Inc., a community rehabilitation program. Wendy was interested in a nontraditional career path for women. Her VR counselor recommended the Newgate Education Center, a Minneapolis nonprofit that uses donated cars to offer free automotive training for low-income adults. Wendy began her training. A year later, she completed the program with top honors for her

exceptional performance and became the first-ever female graduate of Newgate's auto mechanic program.

With financial assistance from VR for tools, uniforms and mileage, Wendy was ready to start looking for work. She received valuable job-search assistance and in April 2012 Wendy landed a 32 hour-a-week job as a technician at Rydell Auto Outlet & Garage. She has performed well enough to receive a pay raise and full-time hours. Wendy has worked her way off public assistance. VR, Rise and the Family Life Mental Health Center continue to provide counseling and guidance.

"My daughter is very proud of me," Wendy says, with a big smile. Wendy has earned the respect and loyalty of her manager and co-workers, who all praise her work. They also support Wendy's plans to advance her career by earning full certification from the National Institute for Automotive Service Excellence.



Living the American Dream

Ty Lancaster was adopted at birth and diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder with Learning Disabilities (ADHD-LD) and Oppositional Behavioral Disorder at age four. Ty struggled, especially in school. He overcame many obstacles, including bullying. Due to his strong desire and determination, Ty graduated from high school.

Following graduation, Ty got a job near his home. For 11 years he worked long hours in harsh conditions but was grateful to



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have a job. Ty's job ended abruptly when the company was sold. Ty went to the Arkansas Workforce Services Center where he applied for unemployment benefits. There Ty met a very helpful worker who talked with him about learning additional skills to help him obtain a job with the assistance of Arkansas Rehabilitation Services (ARS).

Ty's VR Counselor at ARS helped him enroll in the Arkansas Career Training Institute (ACTI). It was a difficult transition; he had never lived away from home. The school also discovered that Ty had a significant anxiety disorder with social phobia in addition to ADHD-LD. With encouragement and assistance from the devoted ACTI staff, Ty studied very hard and graduated with honors. He learned new skills in Small Engine Technology and many new life skills. He is more independent and self-sufficient.

After graduation, Ty returned home. He continued to receive support services from an ARS Business Relations Representative. Ty was hired part time by Food Giant as a customer service assistant. He eagerly applied his new skills and gained confidence working with people. VR then helped Ty connect with Republic Services, Inc. for a position near his home. Ty knew the route and could commute independently. He was hired in a temporary position but told he would be moved to full time if he performed well. Two months later, Ty was hired full time. He receives good wages and a benefits package. He is very grateful for his new job.

Ty set a new goal – living on his own. He applied for a home loan with assistance from his mother, friends, and co-workers. Ty was approved for his loan and is a proud new homeowner. Ty now lives independently in the community. He has a great sense of achievement as a productive member of his community.

Ty and I are grateful for staff at ARS and the ACTI who are helping people with disabilities achieve a better life. Without these programs, many people with disabilities will not be given an opportunity to work and live independently. They provide education, services and life skills that teach individuals how to become more productive members in society. They are given new hope and the kind of opportunity that truly makes a difference.

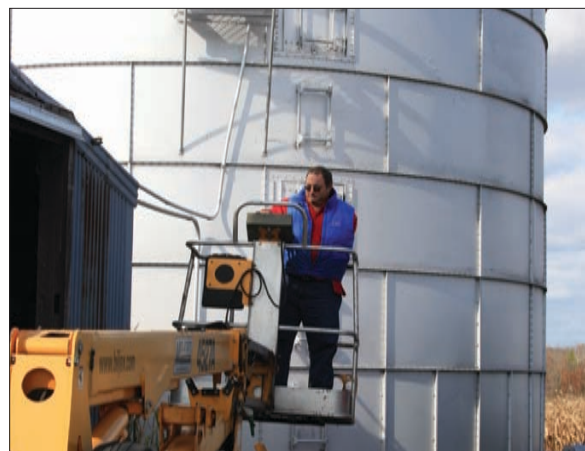
"Because of the programs and dedicated staff at ACTI, the transition services provided by ARS after returning home, and caring employers and business people in the community, Ty is a true success story. Why am I so sure he is a true success story? I am Ty's mother and I watched him succeed every step of the way." –Alice Lancaster



A Business Owner Rebuilds with VR Support

Mr. Henry McDuffie sought assistance from the Florida Division of Blind Services seeking assistance to maintain his business. He had Bilateral Cataracts PSC – when posterior subcapsular cataracts develop on the back part of the lens. Mr. McDuffie is a carpenter whose work includes among other duties, laying flooring and installing fencing. Mr. McDuffie received support for corrective surgery, eye medications and special eye wear, and was able to have bilateral cataracts removed. He is now able to perform up-close work related tasks. Mr. McDuffie is very grateful to Division of Blind Services and has stated that his work is very satisfying. Mr. McDuffie is the proud owner of McDuffie Floor Covering LLC, which is located in Crawfordville, Florida. Mr. McDuffie is truly an inspiration and a great success story!

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VR in the Heartland of America

Careers in agriculture can be dangerous. Along with accidents, the physical nature of the work can cause wear and tear on the body and chronic conditions such as arthritis.

For farmers who experience disability, AgrAbility and a state's Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program, can provide the expertise and accommodations that allow a farmer to continue farming. In Wisconsin, AgrAbility is a successful partnership between the Wisconsin Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, The FARM program at Easter Seals Wisconsin and the University of Wisconsin Extension.

Alan Kaltenberg experienced the dangerous nature of farming at an early age. When he was four years old, he was involved in an accident with farm machinery that resulted in the loss of his left arm. Kaltenberg, who is now 50, took over the operation of his family farm and continues to farm about 300 acres of corn, soybeans, wheat and raising beef cattle. About 4 years ago, Kaltenberg again came face to face with the dangers of farming. He fell 30 feet from a grain bin, landing on his feet. The fall splintered the bones in his legs, from his ankles to his hips.

After a recovery of several months, Kaltenberg contacted AgrAbility, who provided an assessment of the farm and Wisconsin DVR provided the accommodations that would make it possible for him to continue farming.

After his injury, walking on uneven terrain became almost impossible. An all-terrain vehicle with one-handed controls allows Kaltenberg to access all 300 acres of his farm. Other accommodations included a boom lift to eliminate the need for

climbing ladders, a skid loader, and stairs built into various areas of his barn, again, to eliminate the need for climbing ladders.

For the farmers served by Wisconsin DVR and AgrAbility, farming is more than a job. More than even a career – it is truly a way of life. Kaltenberg said, "I love it. How many people can say they really love what they do?"



Life Changes in an Instant. . .

Throughout his young life, Corby loved doing back flips, which he taught himself through progressively more difficult practice. While attending college, where he was taking 14 credit hours and working 35 hours per week, Corby regularly commuted 45 minutes away from home. With that demanding schedule, Corby had a lot of pent-up stress and energy. One day while waiting for the bus, he decided to release some of that energy by doing a series of back flips against a wall. In the process, he slipped and hit the back of his neck, breaking his neck in two places. This resulted in him becoming a quadriplegic.

Corby came to Utah Vocational Rehabilitation (VR). VR assisted him with guidance and counseling, helped him to modify his van and continue his education. Corby was able to concentrate on his schoolwork and on making himself better after the accident. Corby graduated with his B.A. in Computer Science in 2010. On February 1, 2011 Corby started working as a software developer. With hard work, determination, and resources like VR, Corby is living life to the fullest. Corby is currently a Junior Software Engineer for Mobile Productivity, Inc. (MPI) which is a child company of Service Repair Solutions (SRS). In the last two years he has received performance based pay increases of \$20,000. Corby is also a burgeoning musician. Learn more about him and his music at: <http://corbycampbell.com/>



BUSINESS PARTNERSHIPS



In 2012, the innovative partnership between Lowe's and NET/VR resulted in 556 VR candidates becoming employed, productive members of the American workforce.



The Federal Government: A Model Employer of People with Disabilities

As the nation's largest employer, the Federal Government has made great strides towards accomplishing the goals set out in Executive Order (EO) 13548 on Increasing Federal Employment of Individuals with Disabilities. Issued to mark the historic 20th anniversary of the signing of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the EO directs executive departments and agencies to improve their efforts to employ federal workers with disabilities and targeted disabilities through increased recruitment, hiring and retention. The EO works in coordination with EO 13518 on Employment of Veterans in the Federal Government issued on November 9, 2009; Presidential Memorandum on The Presidential POWER Initiative: Protecting Our Workers and Ensuring Reemployment issued on July 19, 2010; EO 13583 on Establishing a Coordinated Government-wide Initiative to Promote Diversity and Inclusion in the Federal Workforce issued on August 18, 2011.

Since the President signed EO 13548, agencies have submitted a Disability Action Plan outlining goals and strategies to implement the Order. Using data collected from the Standard Form 256 Self-Identification of Disability, each agency has identified targeted populations of people with disabilities for outreach and recruitment.

The White House, Office of Personnel Management (OPM), Chief Human Capital Officers (CHCO) Council, Department of Labor (DOL), Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) and Office of Management and Budget (OMB) work closely with designated senior-level agency officials to implement the Disability Action Plans.

In Fiscal Year (FY) 2011, employees with disabilities in the Executive Branch represented 11 percent of the overall Federal workforce. As of FY 2011, the number of non-seasonal, full time permanent Federal employees with disabilities was approximately 204,189, including people with targeted disabilities, all other disabilities, and 30 percent or more disabled Veterans. This is more people with disabilities in federal service both in real terms and by percentage than at any time in the past 20 years. Also, in FY 2011, 14.70 percent of all new hires or 18,738 people in the Federal Government were people with disabilities.

While there is still work to be done, the federal government is committed to being a model for the employment of people with disabilities. **"Wonderful partnerships with Vocational Rehabilitation programs and the National Employment Team at CSAVR are instrumental to the federal government's success," states OPM staff.**

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Employing Talent in Federal Service

Katie Lee learned about the Maryland Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS) through the Social Security Administration's Ticket to Work program. She is an attorney and she wanted to go to work, but said "After being out

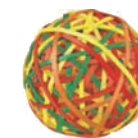
of the job market for a while, it was tough to get back in and I thought any kind of assistance would be good."

Katie, who is legally blind, worked with DORS Office for Blindness & Vision Services Employment Specialist, Darlene Peregoy, and got feedback on her resume writing and job interviewing skills. Darlene says Katie was undervaluing her professional experience. "I worked with her to rework her resume. She had done a lot of great volunteer work, so we needed to emphasize the valuable experience that she had."

DORS also helped Katie obtain Schedule A certification (Schedule A allows for non-competitive appointment to federal jobs of qualified candidates with disabilities).

Katie is now a Legal Administrative Specialist at the Office of Personnel Management's (OPM) Retirement Services Department where she adjudicates retirement claims for former federal employees.

Without DORS assistance, Katie thinks she would still be unemployed. "The job market was incredibly tough when I started looking, made more so by the fact that I had a disability and had been out of the job market for a while, which resulted in a 'gap' in my resume. My experience is that the longer you have been out of a job, the tougher it is to come back... so I really appreciate the support I got from DORS."



OfficeMax



OfficeMax and the NET/VR: A Partnership that Promotes Diversity through Disability Employment

"The real journey began when we started to sharpen our focus on the full dimensions of diversity in the workforce," saysCarolynn Brooks, VP, chief diversity officer for OfficeMax. "We knew we needed to reach more candidates with disabilities, including veterans, because they bring significant value to the workplace."

Seeking to learn from a leader in disability employment with similar distribution and retail environments, the OfficeMax team reached out to Walgreens, a partner with Vocational

Rehabilitation's National Employment Team, The NET. This linkage led OfficeMax PowerMax Director Val Novokhatskyy to Alabama's Vocational Rehabilitation Service (VRS) business relations program.

"This is about increasing the diversity of our workforce in McCalla," says Val. "But more importantly, it's about creating a win-win situation for people with disabilities and OfficeMax by leveraging the loyalty and dedication of this group of people." Since May 2012, more than 37 VRS consumers have been hired at OfficeMax PowerMax in Alabama with a much higher retention rate than the exist-

ing workforce. Those hired include employees with deafness, low vision, orthopedic issues, Asperger's or other cognitive impairments, and those with mental health challenges. VR has provided a variety of accommodations. VRS's business relations consultants trained OfficeMax (OM) supervisors and managers on disability awareness and etiquette.

This OM-VRS partnership now includes an on-site pre-hire work readiness training program where OM has created a simulated distribution center to train VRS job candidates with more significant disabilities. OM provided the inventory, labor, and time; VRS contributed the trainer, accommodations, and other program supports. Cary Boswell, commissioner of the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services (VR) states his agency's committed to the VRS-OM partnership – "It's been extremely beneficial for OfficeMax, people with disabilities and VRS. We will continue to dedicate our resources to ensuring that this partnership grows and is successful."

- Greg Rhein has Asperger's syndrome. Despite his prior work experience, businesses didn't see his potential, leaving him dependent on Social Security benefits. Today, Greg's skills are being put to work as a receiver at the McCalla PowerMax.

- Michael Cook recently recovered from kidney transplant surgery. He simply wanted to get back to work and contribute to his community. He is now employed in the receiving department and is grateful for the opportunity to work.

- Johnny Jackson is deaf. He graduated from Gallaudet University with a degree in math and was hired as a receiver. He quickly moved into a forklift operator position and was offered the opportunity to move into a technical role commensurate with his degree.

In November 2012, OfficeMax in McCalla received the Partnership of the Year Award from the Alabama Governor's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities. The corporate office has also received a Kessler Foundation grant to develop a pre-training option that will enhance their efforts to hire people with disabilities nationwide.

"OfficeMax is not only doing this to make our business better. We are changing lives, giving parents hope, and creating opportunities for individuals with disabilities to have a career," says Larry Hartley, Senior Vice President, Supply Chain, for OfficeMax. The NET/VR stands ready to assist nationally, it's good for business and it makes a difference in the lives of individuals with disabilities.



The NET/VR–OfficeMax Partnership in Maryland

The successful collaboration between OfficeMax (OM) and the Maryland Department of Education's Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS) began with a trip to South Carolina. A team of OM executives, including Elkridge, Maryland Operations Director Hank McDonald visited an Anderson, SC distribution center to learn about an initiative to hire employees with disabilities.

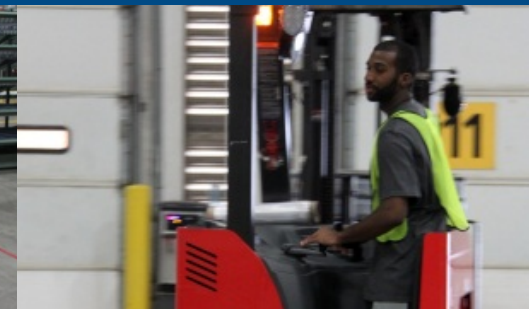
Hank was impressed, and when OM Human Resources Generalist Jani Burns transferred to Elkridge, the two made promoting a similar initiative a priority.

Jani connected with the Maryland VR Business Specialists team to talk about how the two organizations could work together to find employees for OM. Jani was quickly sold on the partnership. "I liked what the VR team had to say; they weren't just checking off boxes...they showed a genuine interest in the OM operation." Within six months, two DORS consumers were hired by OM: Wei Attia and Melinda Kowalski (pictured above right). Both women, who are deaf, work as Distribution Specialists. DORS provided four months of on-the-job support for the new employees, as well as

ASL interpreters and disability etiquette training for the warehouse staff, and assisted with OM receiving financial hiring incentives. Jani conducted training for the Elkridge management team on OM's diversity and inclusion initiative. Wei and Melinda are enthusiastic about being at OM because of the "great teamwork" and Hank reports that there have been unexpected benefits to hiring employees who are deaf. "We had to make some minor accommodations for better communication and that has helped everyone." Jani also notes the effect on the group, "This has been a great team-building experience for all!"



OfficeMax and VR Leadership in Alabama



Johnny Jackson, OfficeMax Alabama



Michael Cook, OfficeMax Alabama



GLOBAL LEARNING— GLOBAL OPPORTUNITIES

Recognizing the need to always keep learning and that we live in an international economy, in the Spring of 2012, CSAVR began discussions with our European counterparts regarding the development of global learning communities. It has led to the establishment of a working relationship with the European Platform for Rehabilitation (EPR), headquartered in Brussels, Belgium. The focus of this effort is for our two organizations to collaborate by sharing our knowledge and experience to assist our respective members to learn from each other in order to better serve business and persons with disabilities.

In keeping with the above mentioned focus, the governing bodies of CSAVR and EPR have agreed to four areas of collaboration over the next two-year period.

Knowledge Exchange

- Liaison between the leadership of CSAVR and EPR that will disseminate relevant information and documents within their respective networks.
- Create on-line access to resource libraries, resulting in mutual access for membership to protected parts of the websites.

On-line Communities of Practice

- Link the standing committees of CSAVR to the EPR thematic expert groups.
- On-line exchange of knowledge and expertise.
- Joint participation in professional development exercises.

Training

- Identify two topics of mutual interest that results in joint professional development activities for CSAVR and EPR members.
- Exchange experts as trainers (via distance learning or face to face).

Study Visits

- Develop strategic learning opportunities for directors of member organizations to visit projects and programs.
- Identify developmental learning opportunities for emerging and senior leadership.

What's Next?

The leadership of CSAVR and EPR has agreed to two specific professional development topics for our memberships for 2013-14.

1. Person-centered transition planning;
2. Cooperation with business.

Over the course of the spring and summer of 2013, plans will be finalized and member organizations will begin benefitting from these global experiences. It is the vision of the leadership of CSAVR and EPR that this will result in the expansion of our understanding of vocational rehabilitation practice, and an increase in the employment opportunities for persons with disabilities and continuous expansion and improvement in our services to business worldwide.



MEMBERS SUPPORT

The Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR) and its members support the following positions on the Reauthorization of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998, including Title IV, The Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended:

RECOMMENDATIONS	WHY
Amend the Rehabilitation Act to strengthen the authority of the State VR Director to ensure that funds appropriated to serve individuals with significant disabilities are spent only for that purpose.	States sometimes have challenges ensuring that VR funds allocated to them for the purpose of assisting eligible individuals with disabilities to go to work are used only for that purpose. When these funds are so redirected, it is detrimental to public VR's goal of assisting the maximum number of people with disabilities to go to work, including people with the most significant disabilities.
Amend the Rehabilitation Act to include language that acknowledges and supports business as a customer of Vocational Rehabilitation, as well as the eligible individual with a disability.	Current law does not adequately address nor provide support for VR and the business community to work closer together to maximize opportunities for VR's consumers to enter the workforce in greater numbers.
Maintain and increase line item funding for Supported Employment (SE) by amending the Rehabilitation Act to include language that directs unmatched Title 1 reallocation funds to be used to increase funding for SE, which does not require state matching funds.	In challenging economic times, many states are not able to provide the non-federal share of funding required to match all of the federal funds made available to the state. Unmatched funds are subject to be lost from the VR program. CSAVR's recommendations would assure that all funds appropriated for the VR program remain in the VR program.
Amend the Rehabilitation Act to include language that exempts funds used by states to match VR federal funds, in the reallocation process, from the Maintenance of Effort (MOE) requirement.	The Maintenance of Effort (MOE) provision in current law does not provide the exemption proposed by CSAVR and is preventing states who could match additional VR funds in the reallocation process from doing so. This has a negative effect on the number of consumers VR is able to serve and assist with employment in a given year.
Maintain line item funding for Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers as a complementary program to the Rehabilitation Act.	Public VR, due to the high demand for services within the general population of people with disabilities, greatly benefits from this complementary program's focus on service delivery to this specialized population.
New dedicated line-item funding for services to transition youth.	Transition from school to work for youth with disabilities is a high priority in the reauthorization of the Rehabilitation Act. Current staff and resource limitations make it highly unlikely, if not impossible, to achieve the desired outcomes without harm to other customer populations.
Maintain the requirements of the Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD) in current law.	There is a proven need for qualified counselors within Public VR who are trained to address the unique vocational rehabilitation and counseling needs of people with significant disabilities.
Secure a dedicated line item to fund the infrastructure costs of One-Stop Centers.	VR and other mandatory partners in WIA are supporting infrastructure costs of One-Stop Centers, thereby further reducing resources available for case services. To alleviate that burden at the federal level, there should be a line item to fund infrastructure costs rather than taking already scarce funds from partners.
Ensure the physical and programmatic accessibility of One-Stops, Job Training Programs, Educational Programs, and other service programs.	Not all manpower training programs in each state are physically and programmatically accessible to persons with disabilities, which denies people with disabilities equal access to services.
Ensure that State VR Directors maintain seats on state and local Workforce Boards.	Public VR needs to be an integral part of manpower training at the state and local level to ensure the employment needs of individuals with disabilities are represented.